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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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HOMEMAKERS CHAT Friday, October 20, 1939.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "SCHOOL LUNCHES". Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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I've just been reading a very thrilling report--at least to me it was thrilling because it shows so much progress on a very important subject. It's about school lunches--chiefly hot school lunches cooked in the school kitchen, and served in the schoolhouse.

As I read about the bowlfuls of steaming hot soup on snowy days--plates of good tasting stew of meat and vegetables--sandwiches toasted on an electric grill, I got to feeling very sorry for myself. I decided I'd lived too soon. I wanted to turn back the calendar (I won't say just how many years). Anyway I wanted to be able to run down the road to the "little red schoolhouse" with only my books swinging by a long strap--no tin lunch box to slip and slide--and no paper bag of cold sandwiches to get colder and drier before recess.

Not that my lunch wasn't good food. And there generally was an apple, or an orange, or some crisp raw celery to break the monotony. And there were good home-made cookies. But I did want something warm in my tummy at noon. Even then I had a suspicion my head would work better in the afternoon if I had a different kind of a lunch. But I lived too far from school to go home at noon. And there wasn't any arrangement even for heating soup or making cocoa in the schoolhouse.

But times do change. And now, this fall, the organized school lunch with plans for serving hot food to hungry youngsters is getting off to a better start than ever it seems. One reason is the Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation is making food available for a nationwide school lunch program for underprivileged children.

The program was first announced in August. And it's going forward as originally mapped. Changes in the food situation caused by the world crisis are not stopping this plan to help feed America's needy children.

Already schools in every State are cooperating. If plans continue to go forward, as they are now doing, between now and the time school closes next spring, the Director of the Program hopes that as many as five million underprivileged children will have a good substantial lunch every school day.

Anybody who is interested in knowing more about this school lunch program can get full details by writing to headquarters in Washington. Address your letter to the Director of the School Lunch Program, Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation, Washington, D. C., and you'll find out how a local school can tie-in with this big program for hot school lunches.

Then another thing, in communities where parents have plenty to pay for good food for their children, there's more interest in making the school lunch a community enterprise. Parents, and teachers, and doctors see how much better the children are when they eat at a well-run school cafeteria. They grow better. They look healthier. They have fewer colds. And they actually get better grades in school.

Mary Schwartz Rose of Columbia University, one of the leading nutrition experts of the country, even goes so far as to say:

"The machinery of education is wasted if it operates on a mind listless from hunger or befogged by indigestible food, whether the cause be carelessness, poverty, or ignorance."

Well, enough for the reasons why youngsters in school need a substantial hot meal at noontime.

Now, for two or three suggestions about menus and recipes for use in the school lunchroom. The same recipes that work in the home kitchen won't always work

in the school kitchen. Equipment is often limited. Lots of the cooking has to be done on top of the stove. The oven may not be big enough to take a baked dish for fifty or a hundred children.

And the emphasis all through the menu is on the "protective" foods--foods rich in minerals, and vitamins, the things children need "to grow on".

So is you happen to be a leader of a school lunch project, or a member of a P.T.A. group interested in organizing a lunchroom at the school, I just want to remind you that the Bureau of Home Economics of the United States Department of Agriculture in Washington, has a very helpful bulletin. It gives recipes in quantities to serve fifty children. And it outlines three weeks of school lunch menus.

If you write to the U. S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, they'll be glad to send you this free bulletin. Just be sure to make it clear that you want large quantity recipes for the school lunch cooked and served at school.

Also don't forget that there are other possibilities to the school lunch program beside the food itself. The lunchroom is a perfect place to get in training in courtesy, and cleanliness, and general health habits. Children are very clever about making posters and cartoons on such themes as "soap and water before soup", "clean hands come before a clean plate", "take time to chew your food". And they enjoy too being on teams to help keep the room in order, bring fresh flowers, and put up simple decorations for holidays.

All these ideas are carried back home too. And the school lunch run on such a plan is education for the whole community.

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